

Testimony of

A Ramirez

Educator

Before the

Education Committee

March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

Being in the classroom has changed dramatically in the last decade in ways that nobody could've predicted. The most recent change of a 30 minute lunch has been amazing as I am now actually able to eat my lunch and spare a few minutes to go to the bathroom, things most adults take for granted. I may not be a first year teacher anymore, but setting a minimum starting salary for them would make a difference for the new teachers in my building. CT is an expensive place to live and once you factor having a family into that, the teacher salaries as they stand just aren't enough. A number of us work up to 50 hours a week what with additional responsibilities, insufficient time for prep, etc, that a minimum starting salary is the least we can do for our newest teachers. A \$500 dollar tax credit would also go a long way in helping defray the amount of money new teachers spend on their classroom. I've lost track of how many thousands of dollars I spent in my first 5 years of teaching, money that I will never get back, just because I had to build my own classroom library, organize my classroom's contents, or purchase items for special events for students and families. Every little bit helps and I have no doubt that new teachers will appreciate the tax credit. COVID Benefit Enhancement- one word: YES! Those are by far some of the hardest, most stressful and anxiety inducing years in the classroom. I am still feeling the after effects in my students as I'm sure we all will for the next 2-3 years when the COVID babies come to kindergarten. Which leads me to raising the Kindergarten start age, please DO THIS!! I have been teaching Kindergarten for the better part of a decade and I wholeheartedly believe that we are doing our youngest students a disservice by allowing them to enroll in K at the age of 4. Kindergarten is nothing like it used to

be 10, 20, 30 years ago. Not only is the day long, but it extremely rigorous and academic. My students who enter K at 4, especially my boys, lack the maturity, social skills, executive functioning, and attention span necessary to function in a classroom setting where they are 1 of 20 (if we're lucky!). There is no need for a 4 year old to be in a Kindergarten classroom. They should be in a pre k classroom where they can continue to hone their fine motor and gross motor skills and develop their social emotional skills. Giving them the gift of time is a sure fire way to ensure that less students struggle in kindergarten and beyond and will lessen the likelihood of a child needing to repeat a grade. PLEASE RAISE THE STARTING AGE! Us kindergarten teachers have been shouting this from the rooftops for years. It's absolutely devastating watching a 4 year old struggle the first half of Kindergarten when this all could've been avoided had they started school the following fall at the age of 5.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

